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ABSTRACT

Sources in this annotated bibliography are compiled for investigators in speech communication and social sciences interested in the influence of the group on the individual member (conformity and deviation), and for those interested in group consensus formation and the consequences of pressure to uniformity (polarization). The 34 citations include recent conformity and polarization research as well as classic early studies on the subject. (JG)

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CONFORMITY AND GROUP POLARIZATION

A Selected Annotated Basic Bibliography

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Many research areas in communication and the other social sciences suffer from "categorical multiplicity" i.e., research focusing on a specific phenomenon may be cited under one of several equally appropriate headings. This is particularly true of research in conformity and its mirror image, deviation. Investigators interested in the influence of the group on the individual member should look first under the heading conformity. Other possible topics include group pressure for uniformity, social influence, interpersonal influence and normative behavior.

Another area of research has emerged as an important phenomenon for investigators of group consensus formation. This research was first reported in the early 1960's under the label risky shift. Recently, however, the phenomenon has been more accurately described as group polarization. The proliferation of group polarization research in the last ten years explains the apparent decline in conformity research. Researchers have not lost interest in conformity and deviation as dynamic variables in group process. Instead, their focus has shifted from the effects of the group upon the individual to the ultimate consequences of pressure to uniformity, group polarization.

The present bibliography contains recent citations for conformity and polarization research as well as the classic early studies by Asch, Schachter, Crutchfield, Stoner, Wallach, Myers and Lamm. Additional sources may be found in Communication Abstracts, Psychological Abstracts, and Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, published annually. Resources are also available from the ERIC database.

Adams, Gerald R. "Physical Attractiveness, Personality and Social Reactions to Peer Pressure." Journal of Psychology, 1977, 96: 287-96. Results of this experiment showed that physically attractive persons, in comparison to their lesser attractive peers, were more likely to have internalized socially desirable personality characteristics and show resistance to peer pressure influences. Some evidence suggested that attractiveness was related to the internalization of cognitive-social characteristics for females.

Allen, Vernon L., and Wilder, David A. "Impact of Group Consensus and Social Support on Stimulus Meaning: Mediation of Conformity by Cognitive Restructuring." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1980, 39: 1116-1124. After observing the consensually produced meanings for stimulus objects, Ss shifted their own opinions toward the position held by the unanimous group.

Allen, Vernon L. "Situational Factors in Conformity." Advances in Experimental Psychology, Vol. 2. Edited by Leonard Berkowitz. New York: Academic Press, 1965. This study offers definitions that are used in studying conformity. While it is a separate study on conformity, it also cites numerous other works on conformity. It is an excellent beginning work for the study of conformity.

Allen, Vernon L., and Levine, John M. "Social Support and Conformity: The Effect of Differentiation From the Group and Order of Responding." University of Wisconsin Research and Development Cent - for Cognitive Learning. A report of an experiment that investigated two variables relevant to explaining the phenomenon of social support between members of a group in certain situations. (ERIC ED 064 658, 1969, 14p.)

Asch, Solomon E. "Effects of Group Pressure Upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments." Groups, Leadership, and Men. Edited by H. Guetzkow. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1951. This article points out that the character of a stimulus situation, the character of the group forces, and the character of the individual are the main factors that induce an individual to resist or yield to group pressures.

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Cartwright, Dorwin, and Zander, Alvin. "Pressure to Uniformity in Groups: Introduction." Group Dynamics (3rd ed.) New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

Crutchfield, Richard S. "Conformity and Character." The American Psychologist, 1955, 10: 191-98. This article explains the use of a contrived situation to test the impact of group pressure on conformity using an electronic machine rather than human confederates to stimulate decisions about stimuli, thus allowing an objective measurement in a standardized and controlled situation.

Danowski, James A. "Group Attitude Uniformity and Connectivity of Organizational Communication Networks for Production, Innovation, and Maintenance Content." Human Communication Research. 1980, 6: 299-308. The content carried via communication networks and the attitudes of the group members influence group relationships. In particular, production network groups demonstrated that as connectivity increases, uniformity of socioemotional attitudes increases.

Davis, James H.; Holt, Robert W.; Spitzer, Craig E.; and Stasser, Garold. "The Effects of Consensus Requirements and Multiple Decisions on Mock Jury Verdict Preferences." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 1981, 17: 1-15. Findings confirmed earlier observations about the importance of the initial majority in determining the verdict, but the majority did not always prevail and there was marked asymmetry in its action.

Godwin, William F., and Restle, Frank. "Road to Agreement: Subgroup Pressures in Small Group Consensus Processes." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1974, 30: 500-9. This study introduces the theoretical problem of the sequence of states through which a group progresses on its way to consensus, and the nature of the transition between states.

Goethals, George R., and Zanna, Mark P. "The Role of Social Comparison in Choice Shifts." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1979, 37: 1469-1476. Shifts toward risk were as likely to occur in groups where Ss exchanged information about their positions on the CDQ's and information about their self-ratings of ability as in ordinary group discussions of the CDQ items. Comparison processes may be engaged fully only when comparability is established by knowledge of other group member's standing on traits thought to be related to risk-taking. (Choice Dilemmas Questionnaire)

Goldberg, Carlos. "Sex Roles, Task Competence, and Conformity." Journal of Psychology, 1974, 86: 157-64. This study investigated the relative importance of sex roles and task competence as regards the relationship between sex and conformity. It can be said that the nature of the task is indeed an important variable in this relationship, but sex role remains a crucial variable in determining conformity.

Gormly, John; Gormly, Anne; and Johnson, Charles. "Consistency of Sociobehavioral Responses to Interpersonal Disagreement," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1972, 24: 221-24. This study examined assumptions that generalized styles of responding to interpersonal disagreement are represented by individual differences in amount of conformity, under recall of the extent of disagreement, rejection of the disagreeing person, and devaluation of the significance of disagreement.

Hancock, Rodney D., and Sorrentino, Richard M. "The Effects of Expected Future Interaction and Prior Group Support on the Conformity Process." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 1980, 16: 261-269. Conformity was found to correlate negatively with both confidence in task ability and feelings of group acceptance when future interaction with the group was anticipated.

Hill, Timothy A. "An Experimental Study of the Relationship between the Opinionatedness of a Leader and Consensus in Group Discussion of Policy." Results of an experiment that analyzed comparative results of discussion groups with leaders that exhibited opinionated, moderately opinionated, or unopinionated styles. (ERIC ED 073 491, 1972, 22p.)

Insko, Chester A., et al. "Conformity as a Function of the Consistency of Positive Self-Evaluation with Being Liked and Being Richt." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 1983, 19: 341-358. Conformity effects are at least partially a function of the consistency of positive self-evaluation with being liked and the consistency of positive self-evaluation with being right. Tests subjects under public and private conditions.

Janis, Irving L., and Mann, Leon. Decision-Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice and Commitment. New York: The Free Press, 1977. This extension of Janis' earlier writing on the group-think hypothesis provides a descriptive theory of how people cope with decisional conflict. The authors present patterns for coping with stress and the antecedent conditions that lead the individual to select a decision-making pattern. Conformity behavior results from efforts by directive agents to induce compliance. These tactics take the form of threats, rewards, justifications and social pressure.

Kinball, Richard K., and Hollander, Edwin P. "Independence in the Presence of an Experienced but Deviate Group Member." Journal of Social Psychology, 1974, 93: 281-92. This experiment provided three possible alternatives in response to social influence: agreement with a majority, agreement with a minority, or independence from both. The results showed no major effect for the majority vs. minority agreement. The presence of an experienced deviate significantly increased independence from all others.

Lamm, Helmut, and Myers, David G. "Group-Induced Polarization of Attitudes and Behavior." Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol 11. Edited by Leonard Berkowitz. New York: Academic Press, 1978. The authors present an overview of group polarization research with many examples of the phenomenon taken from the "real world."

Larsen, K.S.; Triplett, Jeff S.; Brant, William D.; and Langenberg, Don. "Collaborator Status, Subject Characteristics and Conformity in the Asch Paradigm." Journal of Social Psychology, 1979, 108: 259-163. Locus of control and status of collaborators were found to relate to conformity in groups. A significant interaction effect exists between sex and status of collaborators, suggesting that status is a more salient variable for males.

Lewis, Steven A. et al. "Expectation of Future Interaction and the Choice of Less Desirable Alternatives in Conformity." Sociometry, 1972, 35: 440-47. This study tested two hypotheses grounded on the assumption that conformity is an instrumental response in ongoing social interaction. Emphasizing the higher or lower costs of conformity, the researchers hypothesized that conformity would increase when subjects believe that future interaction will take place with the same group and that conformity would increase when subjects' potential responses equaled each other in attractiveness.

Littlejohn, Stephen W. "A Bibliography in Small Group Communication." An annotated bibliography of more than 500 citations of sources published between 1950 and 1969, including texts, expository articles, theoretical writings, experimental studies, and works on the teaching of discussion. (ERIC ED 067 712, 1969, 78p.)

Mullen, Brien. "Operationalizing the Effect of the Group on the Individual: A Self-Attention Perspective." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 1983, 19: 295-322. Support was found for the hypothesis that group members will become more self-attentive and thus become more concerned with matching to standards of appropriate behavior as the relative size of their sub-group decreases.

Nordholm, Lena A. "Effects of Group Size and Stimulus Ambiguity on Conformity." Journal of Social Psychology, 1975, 97: 123-30. This study examined the interaction between stimulus ambiguity and group size. Conclusions were that the group size effect can be obtained in ambiguous stimulus situations, and that previous failures to find this effect may be due to methodological differences.

Price, Kenneth H., and Garland, Howard. "Influence Mode and Competence: Compliance with Leader Suggestions." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 1981, 7: 117-122. When group members are of moderate competence, leaders' ideas to facilitate performance presented in the form of a demand are more successful in gaining compliance than those ideas presented with no direct influence attempt.

Sakurai, Melvin M. "Small Group Cohesiveness and Detrimental Conformity." Sociometry, 1975, 38: 340-57. This investigation studied the effects of group cohesiveness on behavioral conformity under conditions where conformity either promoted or detracted from group welfare.

Santee, Richard T., and Jackson, Susan E. "Indentity Implications of Conformity: Sex Differences in Normative and Attributional Judgments." Social Psychology Quarterly, 1982, 45: 121-125. Differences in conformity rates for males and females were found to be a function of sex differences in the identity implications of conformity such that females will judge conformity as a more positive, self-defining act.

Santee, Richard T., and Maslach, Christina. "To Agree or Not to Agree: Personal Dissent amid Social Pressure to Conform." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1982, 42: 690-700. Public self-consciousness, social anxiety and shyness were found to be directly related to conformity and inversely related to dissent. The relationship of self-concept to dissent and conformity was found to be stronger when peer opinion was unanimous than when it was divided. Self-monitoring was not found to be a significant variable of consent or dissent tendencies.

Schachter, Stanley. "Deviation, Rejection, and Communication." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1951, 46: 190-207. The results of experiments dealing with the consequence of deviation from a group standard are described. The effect of degrees of cohesiveness and relevance of the issue on degree of rejection of a deviate is considered. The effects of these variables on communication and induction within the groups are studied in detail.

Sheehan, Joseph J. "Conformity Prior to the Emergence of a Group Norm." Journal of Psychology, 1979, 103: 121-127. Social influence may occur prior to the emergence of group norms. People behave in a manner they believe will lead to smooth social interaction.

Slatin, Gerald T. "Forced Deviation, Conformity, and Commitment." Journal of Psychology, 1974, 86: 341-53. This paper considers the effects of an initial period of "forced" non-conformity on commitment to an independent position in later trials of an Asch-type experiment. Data from post-session interviews suggest self-expectations to be more important than inputed group expectations in the development of a commitment to an independent position.

Stoner, J. A. F. "A Comparison of Individual and Group Decisions Involving Risk." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, School of Industrial Management, 1961. Male graduate students arrived at group consensus in a life dilemma situation that deviated from the average pre-discussion decisions in the direction of greater risk.

Wahrman, Ralph, and Pugh, Meredity D. "Sex, Nonconformity, and Influence." Sociometry, 1974, 37: 137-47. Male subjects were exposed to a female confederate who violated procedural rules early, in the middle of, late, or never in a series of fifteen trials in a problem-solving situation. The earlier the female violated norms, the less her influence, the more disliked, and the less desirable as a co-worker she became.

Wallach, Michael A.; Kogan, Nathan; and Bem, Daryl J. "Group Influence on Individual Risk-Taking." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology. 1962, 65: 75-86. Authors analyze possible explanations for the shift to risk phenomenon.